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ABSTRACT

The concept of learning resources in higher education has historically been identified with and limited to books and libraries and been thought of as an aid to teaching. The new, individualized approach to education stresses the importance of student learning, regards the faculty as managers of learning rather than as teachers, and assumes that students learn better when exposed to varied instructional materials. Based on this approach, the learning resources concept must be broadened to combine both print and nonprint collections into an instructional materials center which is properly seen as a means of facilitating learning. Such a learning resource center should be an integral part of the school's total educational program, and not a separate unit which is functionally and administratively remote from teaching and learning. It should be directed by a specialist in the movement of information from source to user and have a staff characterized by a commitment to service to the learner. (PB)

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THE CONCEPT OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY LEARNING RESOURCES CENTERS

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The idea of the learning resources center* as an administrative unit in higher education is a relatively new concept. Shores (1970, p. 59) found that at least three hundred colleges and universities are currently carrying out experiments involving some of the learning resources center concepts. Ten percent of the 1,193 libraries surveyed by Foreman in 1968 indicated that they were involved in implementing some aspect of the learning resources center concept and thirty-seven percent reported that they were planning to introduce part of the concept at a future date. Even though many of the experiments are presently confined to community colleges, recent indications point to acceptance of the learning resources center concept on over thirty-five four year college and university campuses.

FUNCTION OF THE LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER

The primary function of the learning resources center is the facilitation of learning by the students. This is a fundamental change from the concept of facilitation of teaching by the faculty which traditional library and audiovisual centers were set up to provide. Learning resources centers have the responsibility to supply students and faculty with resource materials regardless of format. Resources for learning are not limited to the printed word. The basic criterion for learning resource material is the extent to which the materials contribute to the curriculum and the learning experience of the students. Therefore, the major characteristic of the learning resources center is its identification

*A learning resources center is defined in this paper as an administrative unit comprised of print, nonprint materials and equipment for the purpose of facilitating learning by students.

with the college or university's total educational program.

Learning resources centers should provide such services as instructional research, evaluation of learning, course development, training services, production of instructional materials, instructional experimentation and demonstration, along with the regular library and audiovisual services of consultation, selection, dissemination-distribution, utilization of all instructional materials, information sources, and facilities to promote effective learning (Eleventh Lake Okobji). All of these services are designed directly or indirectly to facilitate student learning.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRINT AND NONPRINT COLLECTIONS

History does not indicate the specific date when nonprint materials began developing into separate collections. However, the inception could have been when someone added the concept of materials that produced sound and when informational material began taking on many forms. The importance of content was diminished and variations in form initiated separate centralized collections of print and nonprint materials (Mahaffey).

Audiovisual programs have not always been a part of the American college and university scene. It was not until higher education displayed a great deal of dissatisfaction with the past role of the librarian and services offered by the library that an entire area of specialization - audiovisual - emerged. The emergence of audiovisual programs was the result of years of persistant librarian neglect to organize and disseminate nonprint

materials (Mahaffey). Grove (1969, p. 300) reasoned, "librarians usually register a negative reaction to non-book resources because the library profession has traditionally drawn its membership from the humanities and social sciences." Even today, according to Shores (1954, p. 393), "it is no secret that quite a few librarians of institutions of higher education wish the new-found non-book gadgets were somewhere near the bottoms of a more unfathomable ocean depths." Reciprocal feelings were expressed by Timpano (1970, p. 13): "the librarians and their respective educational associations--in their quest for SURVIVAL, STATUS and POWER, have been driven beyond ethical considerations and practices to achieve their ultimate ends; the domination and control of modern educational technology and its funds". Also, similar feelings are expressed by other audiovisual specialists who retain a pervasive and damaging anti-book bias (Gellerg).

The current segregated instructional services on many campuses are caused by the continuing absence within the professions of any personal pride of identity: this is caused in part by the lack of recognition accorded to and/or felt by librarians and audiovisual specialists responsible for management as well as by a lack of any real appreciation within the professions of the effective roles that all materials can play in helping to meet the learner's needs.

Another stumbling block which stands in the way of developing campus learning resources centers is uncertainty. There is a lack of any clear and acceptable definition of what learning resources centers should contribute toward the total learning process

and a lack of any identification of the specific principles which validate or refute the concept.

Some accepted traditional definitions are at the root of much of the uncertainty expressed within the library and audiovisual professions. Tragically, Stone (1954, p. 358) noted, "the newer media are customarily defined so as to incorporate all communication materials and the equipment for their use, apart from books or other media which utilize the written or printed page. This situation is unfortunate and has been caused in part by excessive pride and ignorance among both librarians and nonlibrary audio-visual specialists and too much separate on-campus promotion of newer media as the result of imagined competition with the old." The definitions have created habits and practices in university libraries and audiovisual centers which sometimes have no justification (Commager).

Mitchell suggests that several methodological developments have led to and supported the learning resources center concept. One of the most important is the systems approach to education. Through the use of such systems methodology, learning progresses by providing the staff and support necessary. The result often involves the combined use of print and nonprint technology in education. Dale (1967, p. 33) wrote, "the more numerous and varied the media we employ, the richer and more secure will be the concepts we develop." Therefore, the focus should always be on the facilitation of the process of learning-- not on instructional equipment or print and nonprint materials as such.

LEARNING-TEACHING PROCESS AND ITS PROBLEMS

One of the greatest problems facing institutions of higher education today is that of preparing students for a world that will be existing in an entirely different form when they are responsible adults. Students are aware and concerned about their future and the antiquated process which supposedly is used to prepare them for it. Specifically, they are increasingly critical of traditional methods of education based on credit hours, rigid lecture-discussion classroom procedures, unimaginative reading assignments, and antiquated grading techniques. Tyler (1970, p. 14) wrote, "at present, most college teaching has little impact on student learning." Numerous polls of student discontent which have been reported in the mass media support Tyler's statement by revealing resentment of the growing impersonality caused by numbers and lockstep classroom instruction.

Shores (1968, p. 166) suggests, "the learning of our younger people has been of longer and deeper concern to the faculties of American colleges and universities than to anyone." These concerned faculty are very much aware that today's students have a wider range of individual differences than higher education has ever experienced before. McGrath (1971, p. 3) feels, "much teaching in college and university classrooms results in only a modest amount of meaningful, functional and lasting learning." Colleges and universities are also searching for new ideas and support services which will help meet these individual differences.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO LEARNING PROBLEMS

Simple solutions to the complex problems of preparing students

and meeting their individual differences are not available. However, faculty must learn how to guide or manage learning and students must learn how to learn (Brown). According to Hoban (1965, p. 124), "learning and the management of learning are not equivalent terms any more than are learning and teaching. The so-called teaching-learning problem is subsumed under the management-of-learning problem." Combined print and nonprint can transfigure the traditional image of the faculty as dispensers of knowledge. Now the faculty, hopefully, can better manage student learning by motivating and encouraging. The faculty's responsibility would be directed to the student, not the lecture and the textbook.

The instructional program of any college and university must utilize every method (individual instruction, individually prescribed instruction, discovery, inquiry, etc.) which can make learning more effective and meaningful. Print and nonprint offer greater efficiency, clarify communication, and speed up comprehension. Research and observation indicate that students learn best through experiences which include a wide variety of instructional materials. According to Taylor (1968, p. 168), "materials should be used in varied combinations for mutual reinforcement at any sequential condition of creative inquiry." Simply providing these materials on campus does not guarantee that good education will result. However, an able learning resources center staff will help assure that faculty and students can use available resources with greater skill and interest.

The learning resources center contains all forms of "media" including the book. The fundamental concern of the center's staff

is the organization of materials and equipment, which are carriers, so that the transformation of their products (symbols, signs, and signals) can be converted into knowledge.

Organization of Instructional Services for Learning

Some colleges and universities have set up a unified organizational pattern or administrative structure for print, nonprint materials and equipment which comprises the entire communications and technological complex, excluding the teaching faculty, devoted to the learning process. Because of sloppy theoretical formulation and no identification of justifying principles, some library and audiovisual services separated administratively now find themselves subordinate to a highly complex and artificial nonacademic structure (Business Manager, Campus Relations, etc.) which almost totally ignores learning. This is unfortunate and deplorable!

The learning resources center promotes conceptual formulation and behavioral patterns which are the direct opposite of what has come to be known as "education." Ignoring the fact that the learning resources center does have unique educational goals clouds the learning resources image (Christ). The learning resources center demands an entirely different theoretical framework and cannot be understood or evaluated properly if viewed in the traditional library and audiovisual setting on a typical college or university organization chart.

Organization of the Learning Resources Center

The arrangement and organization of a learning resources center

depend upon the following: (1) the size of the materials collection; (2) the amount of faculty and student research being conducted; (3) the funds available; (4) the location of instructional facilities in relation to the learning resources center; (5) the structure and autonomy of individual departments and the extent of interdepartmental cooperation; (6) the degree and sophistication of reading and viewing habits of the student body; (7) the philosophy of the college or university; and (8) the application of learning theory in the management of the student learning (Jordan).

Developing and implementing the learning resources center concept at the college and university level requires strong administrative and faculty support for the concept. It also demands a thorough understanding and commitment to service on the part of all the center's staff. The key to the start of a learning resources center is service and management more than storage and materials (Brown).

Once the decision has been made to pursue the learning resources center concept, an early target date for implementation should be set. One of Parkinson's laws states that work tends to increase in order to consume the time made available for its completion. If various print and nonprint specialists involved were to give themselves three years tc accomplish integration of all instructional services, it would take them three years; should they allow six months, it would take six months. However, if print and nonprint specialists choose not to work toward an integrated unit, someone

outside their profession must make the choice for them (Philipson).

Concern immediately arises as to who should be the director of the learning resources center. According to Brown, he or she should not be a librarian or an audiovisual director. He or she should be a generalist (a person educated in both print and nonprint materials) who specializes in the movement of information from a source to a patron. He or she is essentially an administrator who helps provide services and specialists so that faculty can manage or guide the learning of students.

The learning resources center, unlike the traditional library and audiovisual center, should be conceived and developed as an integral part of the educational program rather than as an institutional adjunct or field. In the past, emphasis has been placed on organization by function; the trend is to reorganize materials around the subject matter (Jordan). Gulick (1965, p. 12) noted, "Einstein, when he died, was working on a unified field of theory because he suspected that it might be possible to tie together in a single logical system the theory of the atom and the universe." This unified field will evolve in learning resources centers if it is agreed that their operation is partially a science and theoretical principles of systems design are applied to the organization of all information regardless of format. Sarnoff believes that, "the great task of scholarship and leadership in the coming decades is to generalize, integrate, and synthesize this store of knowledge."

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